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MATTERS RELATING TO COMMITMENTS

WORKING GROUP I ISSUES: FRAMEWORK FOR THE NINTH SESSION AND PLANNING PRIOR TO THE FIRST SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES (COP 1)

Note by the interim secretariat

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. At the sixth session of the Committee, Working Group I was mandated to assist in the preparations for the first session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 1) on matters relating to commitments, including the following tasks (A/AC.237/24, paras. 44-45):

(a) Methodologies for calculations/inventories of emissions and removals of greenhouse gases (task A.1);

(b) Criteria for joint implementation (task A.2);

(c) First review of the information communicated by each Party included in Annex I to the Convention (task A.3); and

(d) Review of the adequacy of commitments in Article 4, subparagraphs 2 (a) and 2 (b) (task A.4).

Accordingly, Working Group I has structured its work programme around these four tasks. The sixth session also noted that related tasks could be taken up in conjunction with tasks specified for action by COP 1. The Committee further agreed that it should have an accelerated schedule and set priorities for each session (A/AC.237/24, para. 45).

2. A year has passed since the Committee made its initial planning decisions at the sixth session. It is now known when the Convention will enter into force, when communications from Annex I Parties will become due, and when COP 1 and the intervening sessions of the Committee will take place. Moreover, the discussions at the eighth session, as well as the documents prepared for it and for the ninth session, have begun to flesh out the details of the tasks assigned to Working Group I. Thus, at the half-way point between the organizational session of December 1992 and COP 1 of March 1995, the interim secretariat thought it might be an opportune moment to provide its perspective on the programme of work and how the needs of COP 1 might be met.

3. The interim secretariat has made use of a "results-oriented approach" in considering this programme of work prior to COP 1. That is, an effort has been made to identify the outputs that Working Group I might be expected to develop for consideration by the Committee as a whole and for presentation subsequently to COP 1. Proposals are then offered as to how work might be organized in the time remaining before COP 1 in order to achieve the desired results. The constraints imposed by the calendar will be particularly important (see calendar of key dates attached as annex I). In addition to the present note, the interim secretariat has attempted to reflect a similar approach in the documents prepared for the ninth session. Attention is paid, in these documents, to the interrelationships between the tasks and between the documents, to the expected outputs and how a particular document relates to those outputs, and to the timing constraints.

4. In preparing the present note, the interim secretariat has been very conscious of the amount of Committee time available prior to COP 1. For purposes of discussion, one can assume that the following numbers of days could be available to the Working Group to complete the tasks discussed above:

-	Ninth session:	8 working days
-	Tenth session:	7 working days
-	Eleventh session	8 working days
	TOTAL	23 working days

This would mean that, on average, two days per session would be available for each of the four tasks listed in paragraph 1 above. From another perspective, each of the fourteen issues identified below in paragraphs 8 to 10 would, on average, receive barely one half day's attention per session. This serves to highlight the very limited amount of time available in which to address some highly complex issues and the consequent importance of careful planning and scheduling of work as well as the usefulness of identifying and working towards agreed outputs.

5. In view of the above, the purpose of the present note is to provide the Working Group with a proposed programme of work for the ninth session and to situate that programme of work within the broader context of preparations for COP 1. Section II discusses possible final outputs of Working Group I. Sections III, IV and V address the ninth, tenth and eleventh sessions of the Committee respectively.

II. POSSIBLE OUTPUTS FROM WORKING GROUP I

6. A first step in determining a programme of work leading up to COP 1 is to consider the nature of the outputs that the Working Group could be expected to develop before the close of the eleventh session. These outputs will, in accordance with normal procedures, emerge as recommendations from the Working Group to the Committee. For the purposes of this note, the interim secretariat has assumed that the Committee would develop recommendations for consideration by COP 1.

7. Whatever the character of these outputs, it is possible at this stage to identify a number of distinct issues that could be the subject of Committee recommendations. The following listing has been developed on the basis of the Convention, the deliberations of Working Group I to date and the content of the documents prepared for consideration at the ninth session. It is intended to assist the Working Group in planning its schedule and should not be taken to prejudge the outcome of any Committee decisions, for example, on the nature or subject of the outputs.

8. The outputs of the Committee stemming from the work of Working Group I could encompass the following issues (the relevant task numbers agreed to at the sixth session and noted in paragraph 1 above, are included for ease of reference):

(a) Methodologies for inventories (including guidance on the treatment of emissions from bunker fuels) (tasks A.1, A.2 and A.3);

(b) Guidance on the use of global warming potentials (GWPs) (tasks A.1, A.2, A.3 and A.4);

(c) Guidelines on the preparation of communications from Annex I Parties (task A.3);

(d) Guidance on emissions projections and assessing the effects of measures (tasks A.1, A.2 and A.3);

(e) Periodicity of subsequent communications from Annex I Parties (task A.3);

(f) Procedures for the distribution and translation of communications from Annex I Parties (task A.3);

(g) The roles and responsibilities of the subsidiary bodies established by the Convention in relation to Working Group I issues (tasks A.1, A.3, and A.4);

(h) The process by which communications from Annex I Parties will be considered (task A.3);

(i) The process for the review of the adequacy of Article 4.2(a) and (b) (task A.4);

(j) Criteria for joint implementation (task A.2);

(k) The report on implementation of the Convention (task A.3).

9. The Committee must also decide on how the functions of the subsidiary bodies are to be carried out during the period prior to COP 1 (tasks A.3 and A.4).

10. The above list does not include a number of items that could be characterized as being within the purview of the subsidiary bodies but which stem from the deliberations of Working Group I. As such, they are dependent on the decision taken with regard to how the functions of the subsidiary bodies are to be carried out before COP 1. Nonetheless, it is possible to speculate that the following additional outputs, from whatever forum the Committee may decide, would be required by COP 1:

(a) A technical analysis and compilation/synthesis of the communications from Annex I Parties;

(b) A compilation and synthesis of information on the global situation; and

(c) If decided by the Committee, some substantive advice relating to the adequacy of Article 4.2(a) and (b).

11. There is no question that only the COP is able to make final decisions on issues such as those mentioned in the preceding paragraphs. Nevertheless, the task of elaborating a coherent schedule of work to prepare for COP 1 is complicated by the reality that conclusions or decisions, at least of a provisional character, on many of the items mentioned in paragraphs 8 to 10 above, are required prior to COP 1. In particular, the Committee has to provide early guidance on the preparation of national communications, which includes methodologies for inventories, emissions projections and assessing the effects of measures, the use of GWPs, and the distribution and translation of the first communications. In addition, some early conclusions on the process for

the consideration of the communications from Annex I Parties and the process for the review of the adequacy of commitments will be necessary. (As noted above, the Committee will also decide on the institutional arrangements to carry out the functions of the subsidiary bodies prior to COP 1.)

12. In the light of the above, the rest of this note attempts to lay out, for consideration by the Working Group, a proposed schedule of work for the ninth session, including proposed priorities and outputs. It also offers some initial thoughts on possible priorities for, and approaches to, the organization of work at the tenth and eleventh sessions, with a view to identifying the eventual inputs to COP 1. It is important to note that the decision on how the functions of the subsidiary bodies will be carried out prior to COP 1 may have implications for the scheduling of work.

III. THE NINTH SESSION

13. The agenda of Working Group I at the ninth session is very crowded: a total of nine substantive documents have to be considered in one way or another. A purely logical approach to the organization of work might suggest that the documents be considered more or less in the following order:

- Methodological issues (A/AC.237/44)
- GWPs (A/AC.237/44/Add.1)
- Emissions from bunker fuels (A/AC.237/44/Add.2)
- First review of information: guidelines and procedures for first communications (A/AC.237/45)
- First review of information: report on initiative by Annex I countries (A/AC.237/45/Add.1)
- Roles of subsidiary bodies (A/AC.237/46)
- Review of adequacy of commitments (A/AC.237/47)
- Criteria for joint implementation (A/AC.237/49)
- Report on implementation (A/AC.237/48)

14. Additional considerations are, however, relevant. For example, it might be useful to discuss related aspects of different papers together or consecutively. Scheduling will also have to reflect the priorities for the session as well as the desirability, in several instances, of having early discussions in the Working Group to enable informal and corridor consultations to occur prior to finalizing conclusions. In addition, it could be recalled that there was an understanding at the eighth session that, because of its importance and the fact that it had not been considered by the Working Group, the first item of business at the ninth session should be the review of the adequacy of commitments.

15. The interim secretariat would like to propose as priorities for the ninth session those issues requiring a provisional conclusion at the session so that the process for the communication of information can move forward. These would be:

(a) Guidelines for the preparation of first communications by Annex I Parties;

(b) Methodologies for inventories to be used in the first communications;

(c) The use of GWPs in the first communications;

(d) Approaches to the use of emissions projections and assessing the effects of measures in the first communications;

(e) Distribution and translation procedures for the first communications; and

(f) Institutional arrangements to carry out the functions of the subsidiary bodies on an interim basis.

16. Based on the above paragraphs, a proposed schedule of work for the ninth session is attached as annex II. The proposed schedule of work has been developed on the assumption that it will be useful to undertake a first reading of most of the key issues during the first week of the session. Consequently, it is proposed that the discussion of a particular item, if not completed, be adjourned at the end of its allotted time slot. If further discussion on that item is necessary, it could be scheduled during the second week rather than continuing on the following day. This would avoid other agenda items being pushed back until late in the session.

17. The key features of the proposed schedule of work are the following:

(a) The first item of business would be the review of the adequacy of commitments. There is the possibility of returning to the subject in the second week after the other related issues have been discussed;

(b) The issues relating to methodologies for inventories, GWPs and emissions from bunker fuels would be discussed next so that the Working Group may benefit from the presence of the Chairman of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) during the first days of the session;

(c) The guidelines for the preparation of first communications from Annex I Parties and the issue of emissions projections and assessing the effects of measures would be addressed together, followed by consideration of the procedures for translation and distribution of communications;

(d) The functions of the subsidiary bodies and the institutional options to carry these out prior to COP 1 would then be discussed;

(e) The first week would conclude with a discussion of possible criteria for joint implementation;

(f) The second week would see the continuation of discussions from week one, as necessary, the consideration and adoption of conclusions, which will be particularly important for those items noted in paragraph 13 above, and, if time permits, consideration of other items, such as the report on implementation, and priorities and scheduling of work for the tenth and eleventh sessions.

IV. THE TENTH SESSION

18. On the assumption that most of the substantive discussions on methodologies (including inventories, GWPs and emissions from bunker fuels) and guidelines for communications from Annex I Parties (including emissions projections and assessing the effects of measures) will have been provisionally completed at the ninth session, it is proposed that these issues not be addressed at the tenth session. The focus of Working Group I efforts at the tenth session would be on completing preparatory work to enable the functions of the subsidiary bodies to be carried out prior to COP 1 in the manner to be decided by the Committee. Priority would thus be accorded to developing:

(a) Recommendations to COP 1 on the functions, roles and responsibilities of the subsidiary bodies;

(b) Conclusions on the process for the consideration of national communications;

(c) Conclusions on the process for the review of the adequacy of commitments; and

(d) Conclusions on the nature and timing of the first report on implementation.

19. Priority attention would also have to be given to the criteria for joint implementation. Given the time constraints at the eleventh session, it is likely that the tenth session will be the last opportunity before COP 1 to give significant attention to this matter. It will thus be important to make as much progress as possible in developing conclusions and, if possible, preparing draft recommendations to COP 1.

V. THE ELEVENTH SESSION

20. The eleventh session will be the last occasion for Working Group I to complete its work. It will have to share the time and attention available with the tasks of the Committee relating to:

(a) Financial mechanism;

(b) Institutional matters (including the permanent secretariat);

(c) Organizational arrangements for the COP (including elections and arrangements for ministerial participation).

Subject to a decision by the Committee, it is also possible that a significant amount of the time available to the Committee will be dedicated to carrying out the functions of the subsidiary bodies (see paragraph 22 below).

21. Completion of the work of the Working Group might be expected to include the following:

(a) A brief review of the Committee's previous conclusions on the following issues, to take account of new information, for their refinement and confirmation as recommendations to COP:

- Methodologies for inventories (including guidance on the treatment of emissions from bunker fuels)
- Guidance on the use of GWPs
- Guidelines for the preparation of communications from Annex I Parties, including the periodicity of subsequent communications
- Guidance on emissions projections and assessing the effects of measures

(b) The finalization of recommendations to COP 1 on:

- The roles and responsibilities of the subsidiary bodies
- The process for the review of the adequacy of Article 4.2(a) and (b)
- Criteria for joint implementation
- The report on implementation

22. Document A/AC.237/46 considers three institutional options under which the functions of the subsidiary bodies could be carried out prior to COP 1. Whichever of these options the Committee chooses, it is likely to have significant impact on the time available for the operation of the Working Groups at the eleventh session. Of those functions of the subsidiary bodies that might have to be performed in the period prior to COP 1, the following are relevant to the mandate of Working Group I:

(a) The consideration of the communications from Annex I Parties leading to the elaboration of appropriate conclusions and possible recommendations thereon to COP 1. These could be expected to include, in particular, an aggregate assessment of the results achieved with reference to the benchmarks established in the Convention;

(b) The consideration of information on the global situation leading to the elaboration of appropriate conclusions and possible recommendations to COP 1. This could be expected to be relevant to the review of adequacy of commitments; and

(c) Any consideration of the adequacy of Article 4.2(a) and (b), and on possible follow-up, that the Committee may request in preparation for the review of the adequacy of commitments that COP 1 will undertake.

Annex I

CALENDAR OF KEY DATES PRIOR TO COP 1

1994

7-18 February	INC/FCCC, ninth session
21 March	UNFCCC entry into force
11 July	Target date for completion of distribution of documents for INC/FCCC, tenth session
22-31 August	INC/FCCC, tenth session
21 September	Annex I Parties communications due (if country was a Party on 21 March. Other Annex I Parties' communications follow.)
10-12 November	IPCC, tenth session (considers inventory methodologies and special report to INC/FCCC)
19 December	Target date for completion of distribution of documents for INC/FCCC, eleventh session

1995

6-17 February	INC/FCCC, eleventh session
28 February	Target date for completion of distribution of documents for COP 1
28 March- 7 April	COP 1

Annex II

PROPOSED SCHEDULE OF WORK FOR WORKING GROUP 1

		Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
WEEK 1	AM	Plenary Organization of work	Methodologies . Inventories . GWPs . Bunkers	Review of information . Guidelines . Methodologies - Projections / effects . Procedures	Roles of subsidiary bodies and interim institutional arrangements	Possible criteria for joint implementation
	PM	Review of adequacy of 4.2(a) + (b)	Continued	Continued	Continued	Continued
WEEK 2	AM	Completion of Week 1 discussions	Completion of Week 1 discussions (Report on implementation?)	Informal consultations and adoption of conclusions	Informal consultations and adoption of conclusions	
	PM	Continued	Continued	Continued	Continued	